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In this paper, the author (1) weighs the educational value of an oral language program which attempts to teach standard dialect to speakers of a nonstandard dialect and (2) considers the probable success of such a program, given the present social trends. He voices the following objections: (a) teaching a speaker of nonstandard dialect the standard one does not develop the ability of a person to use language. (b) Too much time is required to acquire the new set of language habits necessary to produce even a mediocre and restrictive performance in standard dialect. (c) The importance attached to being able to perform in a prestige dialect is far beyond its net social worth. (d) The aesthetic of a speech event involves the ability to project personality, style, self-assurance, authoritativeness, and native coloring in a fluent manner regardless of dialect. The author feels that "people's attitude toward other people's speech is merely an extension of people's toward their culture and the people of that culture." He believes that the ability to perform in standard dialect does not help Blacks find employment. There is little opportunity for reinforcement of the standard dialect outside the classroom. He concludes that teaching a prestige dialect is useless without the desire and cooperation of the learners. (DO)

"Social Factors in the Consideration of Teaching Standard English"

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"Social Factors in the Consideration of Teaching Standard English"

The purpose of this paper is two-fold: one, to weigh the educational value of an oral language program which attempts to teach standard dialect to speakers of a non-standard dialect, and two, to consider the probable success of such a program, given present social trends.

My first quarrel with such a program is that is does not develop the ability of a person to use language which I would further define as performance capability in a variety of social contexts on a variety of subject matter. Instead, we utilize valuable time to set up drill exercises which are designed to get the individual to replace socially preferred forms for socially stigmatized ones. I cannot endorse as valid a program that sacrifices individual language growth in exchange for some nebulous and highly problematic "social security." The child comes to us with some ability to play the horn and no ability to play the piano. This type of program presumes that a mediocre ability to play the piano is to be preferred to a better than average ability to play the horn. I cannot accept this thesis.

Underlying this approach seems to be a misapplication of Basil Bernstein's terms which falsely equates restrictive code and elaborated code with respectively, non-standard dialect and standard dialect.

It ought to be noted, as Bernstein uses the term, code is not to be equated with langue, but parole, not with competence but performance. What is restrictive or elaborated is not in fact the code as socio-linguists use the term, but the message.

This false equation is further reinforced by the observation made by some that speakers of standard dialect possess more elaborate users of language than speakers of non-standard dialect. This coincidence is erroneously interpreted to be causal, viz, that speakers of standard dialect are more capable because they speak standard dialect. You hear remarks such as "there are things you can't say in non-standard dialect." These people overlook the fact that standard dialect speakers are so designated by their educational level which often includes being better educated in the use of language. What limitations there are exist in the abilities of the speakers.

I might add that many elaborate users of language perform in the non-standard dialect of the Black Urban Communities and the Kentucky mountains. People who make observations such as the one cited above generally know little of the high degree of verbal performance in the above named sub-cultures and my guess is that they care to know even less.

The point here is that you can and do have elaborate performances in non-standard dialect as well as standard and restrictive performances in standard dialect as well as non-standard.

My second quarrel with such a program deals with what can be called its efficiency quotient. How much time and drill is required to acquire the new set of language habits necessary to produce even a mediocre and restrictive performance in standard dialect. Speech teachers tell me that with maximum cooperation it takes several months of drill to get a person to say ask who formerly said aks. My own observation tells me that the input in time and effort is prodigious and the results negligible. Tying in this remark with those made earlier, how might this time be spent in a fashion more beneficial to the language growth and development of the learner.

My third quarrel deals with the exaggerated importance English and Speech teachers attach to being able to perform in a prestige dialect, far beyond its net social worth. How important is it really to getting or keeping a job, getting the greatest amount of cooperation from your audience, or even being necessary to the aesthetic of a speech event.

As regards getting a job there are any number of factors that take precedence over ability to perform in SE such as labor supply and demand, race, membership in the dominant group, educational level, and presently, ability to threaten the establishment. Some factors influencing social and economic success are social background: race, dominant group membership; ability to manipulate people and situations; skill in exploiting others abilities to personal advantage; acquiring political and social

contacts; ability to project personality, ability to demonstrate skills of intelligence, aggressiveness, shrewdness, guile and judgment and most important, the ability to bluff, i.e. deceive others about one's actual knowledge, ability, intelligence, etc. Add to that, being a member of a group that constitutes a present threat to the establishment.

As regards the thesis that standard dialect is necessary to get the greatest cooperation from the audience I have witnessed too many speech events where the audience accomodated the speaker on his terms and in others where an accent actually added to the authoritativeness of the speaker. Also, it seems to me that speaking a regional standard that is different from the audience's might involve the same social handicap as speaking a non-standard dialect. Educated South Midlanders experience much the same difficulty as uneducated ones in getting housing in Chicago. People from Chicago, New York and elsewhere seem to have different social attitudes toward regional standards and rank them differently on a social scale yet we don't advocate that regional standard speakers accommodate the audience by modifying their speech. The point is if we are attempting to educate people that one regional standard is as good as another why not educate them that all dialects are equally good.

The final point here is that the aesthetic of a speech event involves a great deal more than the simple use of SD speech forms. I have in mind such qualities as the ability to project personality, style, self-assurance, authoritativeness, native coloring, in a fluent manner, regardless of dialect.

I just read where the BBC in London is permitting the reporting of news events in dialects other than the Received Standard. They have found that news broadcasted on the scene by reporters in local dialect added a touch of "realism" to the presentation.

The second part of this paper proposes to deal with the probable success of such a program given present social trends. The audience might well wonder why I am pursuing this aspect after I have just apparently concluded that such a program is not educationally fruitful. You ask "If it is not educationally sound why is it necessary to consider whether it is possible?" Your logic is flawless but unhappily it is based on the illusory assumption that what is done in the classroom is done only after it is decided that it is worth doing. My observation at English, Speech and TESOL conventions and school classrooms in the past persuades me that teachers and supervisors are concerned almost exclusively with methodology:"how to teach it" and are gratuitously deaf to the logically antecedent question of "whether to teach it at all." This portion of the paper is especially aimed at them.

What are the teaching problems facing the teacher who attempts to teach the prestige form of a dialect to let us suppose, Black children, against whom the focus of such a program is generally directed. The two teaching problems he will have to face are social in origin. They are the problems of motivation and reinforcement. Let us consider motivation first.

There are basically two reasons for wanting to learn a second language or dialect: cultural identification and/or functional need. With respect to the first reason we must take into account the alienation Black people feel; with regard to the second reason we must consider the credibility gap that has been created because of the failure of Blacks who had skills to get meaningful jobs. How has language teaching contributed to the alienation and credibility gap we now face? How have both contributed to the failure and frustration of students, producing a drop-out rate of 1000 students a month in our Chicago schools?

In the past and generally up to the present time children have encountered in the English and Speech classroom the prescriptive approach. This approach advanced the superiority of the standard dialect and through the process of exclusion, negation, and derogation the inferiority of the non-standard dialect, and by direct implication: the inferiority of the speakers who speak it and the inferiority of their culture which produces it. To those unwilling to accept the implication, ask yourself why English spoken with a French accent is socially acceptable, even "charming", while English spoken with a Black accent is not. The inescapable social truth of the matter is that people's attitude toward other people's speech is merely an extension of people's attitude toward their culture and the people of that culture. This point is not missed by the culturally different when they enter the middle class establishment of the schoolroom.

What was the underlying perspective behind this approach? Assimilationist! What was the justification? at worst, it was arrogant ethnocentrism; at best, it recognized that the society is prejudiced and the way to escape discrimination was by losing your group identification. Your perspective and attitude said: obliterate what is culturally different, or if you can't, conceal it; relegate it to the inside of your homes. The penalty for non-assimilation was social ostracism, so the groups that could assimilate did, but often with much bitterness and resentment, and then only partially.

The groups that couldn't assimilate or chose not to like American Indians, Blacks and Mexican Americans were and are relegated respectively to the societal oblivion of the reservation and the ghetto. They have been the invisible people of our society.

The assimilationist approach made people resentful, resistant to learning. Now it has made them angry enough to demand, through petition and boycott, an end to this kind of attitude and teaching.

It is to the credit of the linguistic approach that it has at least recognized that the speaker's native dialect has cultural value for him and is not to be tampered with. It advances the teaching of standard English as a second dialect. It is a step in the right direction but it hardly goes far enough. The problem is in its supposedly "realistic" approach. It says that "people make social judgments all the time, that we live in a socially stratified and deterministic society, recognize it! Conform to the existing social order and its rules." Unfortunately, the ling-

uistic approach accepts as social determinant the same obnoxious and racist standards as the perscriptive-assimilationist approach and in so doing merely perpetuates the alienation begun with its predecessor.

If a child does not wish to identify with the larger society, emphasize the functional value of performing in standard dialect; "He'll need it to get a better job," or "teach it to him so that he will be able to decide later on whether he wants to use it or not." This "functional need" motivation falls on unbelieving ears. The Black child knows that he pays the social price for being Black, not because he does or does not speak standard dialect. He asks "why do I have to speak better than the white man to get the same job." Do you need to be able to perform in standard dialect to be a carpenter, plumber, brick layer, construction worker, or printer, or to be any trade or non-trade union employee How many white collar jobs require the ability to perform in standard dialect? Are Blacks going to believe that they are being discriminated against in all of these jobs because they don't speak standard dialect? In 1963 for those Blacks who attended college, their median income was only 60% of that of whites with comparable education. In 1966 Blacks with an eighth grade education earned 80% of what whites earned with comparable education. If educational level, which is a far more significant employment factor than ability to perform in standard dialect, has not been effective in reducing the disparity between Black and white income why should the Black believe performing in the prestige dialect will. According to Report Number 2-Inter

University Social Research Committee called Chicago's Widening Color Gap put out in December 1967 "Negro college graduates in Chicago earn less than white high school drop-outs," (pp.80-81). Also note that the disparity between Black and white income increases the higher the educational level.

With regard to the problem of reinforcement, where is the child going to use, outside of the classroom, the dialect the teacher is attempting to teach him inside? And if he can't find a place to use it, how is he going to acquire a "new set of language habits." The area in which he lives reinforces his native dialect not the standard. In Chicago, it is not unusual for a Black child to have attended 100% Black schools up to and through high school. Clearly, the linguistic approach presumes that integration will take place; either that Black families will move into white areas or that Black children will be bussed into white areas where reinforcement of standard dialect can take place. Demographic statistics show a contrary trend, viz. that Black communities are becoming "blacker" and white communities "whiter." Even in communities such as Maywood, Joliet and Wheaton with which I am partly familiar, with a majority white population, the Blacks invariably live in segregated housing, and socialization in the high school is almost invariably intra-group with very little chance of reinforcing prestige dialect patterns assuming even that high school students speak them.

Finally, the linguistic approach is based on a social fallacy, viz., that the social order is immutably stratified, that the social judgments that people are making today are the same judgments that they will be making fifteen or even five years from now. I find this assumption challenged by present socal trends. The walls of racism are even today starting to crumble and those teachers using the linguistic-integrationist approach will find themselves accused of having made a pact with the same devil as those using the prescriptive-assimilationist approach.

I see ourselves experiencing the throes of social reform this very minute. Our cherished prejudices and practices are being assaulted at every turn, besieged with long hair and "bad manners" on the one hand and Black Power and creative disorder on the other. What if Blacks succeed in changing the social order so that they and their culture will no longer be regarded as inferior by the larger society? What if, in twenty years, you will regard a Black accent comparably to the way you regard today, the accent of a German professor, French singer, or British actor? Does it really matter how people of status speak? You say, what if the social order is not changed? Then I ask you what you have accomplished in your program: the ability to avoid some stigmatized forms which are so stigmatized because the people who speak them are?

Will speaking better remove the stigma attached to that person? At the Democratic convention Julian Bond spoke "Better"

than anyone else there. Will speaking better make Bond president? I doubt it, but Black Power might.

It ought to be clear by this time that what is emerging in our society today is a resurgence of ethnic pride as well as attempts by ethnic communities to establish control over their own destiny. Not only are the culturally different resisting or rejecting the assimilationist pressure of the present establishment they are no longer relegating or subordinating their own culture to the inside of their homes. Ultimately, the choice of what is to be taught and how it is to be taught is the learner's, and educators, like everyone else in our society, will have to respond to the challenge of being "relevant" in both our goals and our methods or be faced with empty classrooms and "student schools."

My conclusion is apparent. The present efforts to teach a prestige form of speech to non-standard speakers is educationally wasteful and the effective realization is socially improbable, unless the express desire and cooperation of those learning it, is forthcoming. That decision will be neither yours nor mine to make!

Those of you who will persist in your efforts despite the resistance of your students, their parents and communities, do so at your own peril.